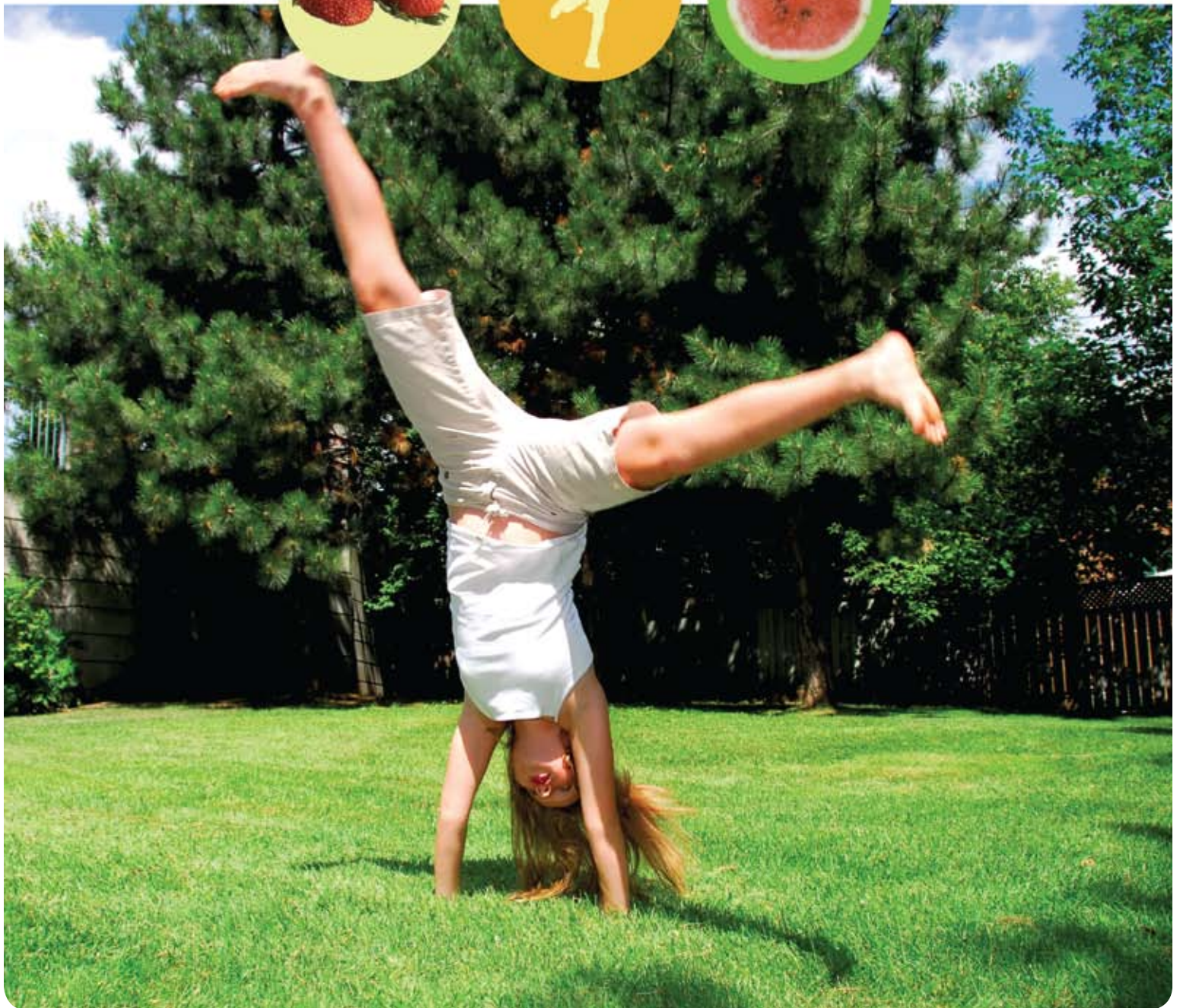


# YOUR VOICE COUNTS

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## A TOOLKIT FOR YOUTH ADVOCACY



# WELCOME!

The Youth Empowered Ambassadors for Health (YEAH!) program was developed by the Florida Department of Health to help students like you promote awareness of and advocacy for healthy behaviors to your friends and your community.

You might work together to get healthy food options in your school cafeteria or to have a walking trail put in a popular area in your city. You and other students can work together with local partners like your county health department, gyms, parks, schools and other businesses and organizations to make changes happen.

## THE GOALS OF YEAH! ARE TO:

- \* Increase lifelong physical activity
- \* Increase lifelong healthy eating habits
- \* Decrease screen time (the total time spent in front of the TV or computer)
- \* Create ambassadors for healthy lifestyle through leadership and peer mentoring

This toolkit was designed using the Florida 4-H Curriculum Development model and has been focus tested with 4-H youth and adults. The model is based on a teaching approach that identifies life skills which are developed, enhanced or strengthened through research-based subject matter and outlines the necessary steps to guide the learning experience. Curricula are designed to be informal and volunteer-led by youth in order to maximize its impact.

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In the next few pages you will find information about how you can make a huge health impact by taking some small steps. This toolkit will teach you how to identify needs and develop realistic solutions to create healthy changes in your school and community. The main way to do this is by building partnerships with friends and community leaders who have the same concerns as you. This toolkit will help you build a successful team and to offer creative ideas to make your school and community healthier and more physically fit.





## A photograph of a woman and a young boy sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. The woman, on the right, is holding an open book and looking down at it. She has dark hair and is wearing a black top and blue jeans. The boy, on the left, is looking at the book. He has light brown hair and is wearing a black t-shirt and khaki shorts. They are sitting on a wooden bench in front of a wooden fence. There are potted plants on a shelf behind them. The photo is framed by a white border with black corner mounts.

Young people have historically been strong advocates for causes like increasing safety belt usage, tackling tobacco companies and making positive changes in their own

You can calculate your BMI on the Internet at [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com).





schools and communities. All around the country, students like you are making big changes in their own communities that benefit everyone.

There are many ways that you and your group can make positive changes. You can start a program in your school or community to focus on an area that you feel is important. Here are just a few examples of what students like you can do when you work together to make a local impact:

- \* **One member of a student organization created a program to help youth suffering from obesity. She learned how to apply healthy nutrition to her daily eating habits and lost 50 pounds as a result. She felt great and wanted to help other kids like her enjoy the same kind of success.**
- \* **Another group of students fundraised \$30,000 to equip police dogs with bulletproof vests because they saw a need to protect these often-overlooked heroes.**
- \* **All-terrain vehicle (ATV) safety legislation was passed by yet another group of students to protect the lives of riders by requiring them to use protective gear and take safety classes.**

You can make a difference by being a leader and a

voice for your community. Decision-makers may not be fully aware of the issues you face or the effects on your student body and community. Even more, they may not know how to solve the problems that contribute to unhealthy lifestyles. That's why you have to take the initiative to tell them.

As an advocate for positive change, there are many ways you can effectively create a strategy to influence the environment around you. If there is a problem – at school, in your community or at an even higher level – there is something you can do about it. No matter if you see the need for improvements in your own school and community or you want to influence a change in your government, there are many ways that advocacy can help reach your goals for positive change.

This might seem a bit complicated at first, but this toolkit will help you assess your current situation, identify problems, create practical solutions and decide how to contact the right people to make your solution a reality. You and members of your club can take it one step at a time.

# LET'S GET STARTED:

Now that you're excited about changing your community, you can begin working through the seven steps of advocacy. These steps will move you from an idea to an action that will produce results. Use this toolkit to guide you through a series of steps to arrive at the final outcome: a positive and healthy change that you feel is necessary for your school, organization or community.

## STEP ONE: BUILDING YOUR ADVOCACY TEAM

You've decided to become an advocate and you know what steps to take to start influencing the world around you. If you think it may be a lot to handle on your own, you're right. Luckily, you won't be working by yourself. Your first task in advocacy is to build a team to work with to reach your goals. Building a team is extremely important. The people on your team will be working with you to make changes around your school or community, so make sure to choose people who truly care about the issues. Recruit both students and adults for your team. You and other students will be doing most of the work, but having a few adults to give you support can be really helpful too.

There are many different tasks that will have to be performed, so you may want to include people who excel at certain qualities. Think about the tasks listed below. You'll really benefit from the help of people who can do one or more of the following things:

➤ Really care about the issues you are tackling

➤ Be creative

➤ Speak in public

➤ Keep track of numbers (good at math)

➤ Be organized

➤ Write well

Working with your team is a very important part of advocacy and is necessary if you want to have a successful campaign. Even though there are different tasks in your projects, you will all need to work together.

This is why it's very important that everyone is respectful and considerate to each other. Remind your team that everyone's opinions count. Everyone has a different way of looking at things and by listening to everyone's ideas your team will be able to come up with great solutions.

To help you build your advocacy team, use the "Developing a Team" worksheet on [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com).

The following is a list of advocacy steps you can use to promote awareness of and advocacy for healthy behaviors:

1. Build a Team
2. Identify the Problem
3. Suggest Possible Solutions
4. Choose a Realistic Solution
5. Create a Clear Message
6. Contact the Appropriate Decision-Makers
7. Deliver the message and Inform the Public





## STEP TWO: IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM OR ISSUE YOU WANT TO CHANGE

The second step is to identify a problem or issue you want to change. This involves assessing the needs and wants of your peers and neighbors. What does your school, club or community need that it doesn't have to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity?

Before you identify a specific problem, look at different areas regarding healthy behaviors and think about how your community, school, or club provides you and others access to healthy choices. Everyone in your school and community should have access to resources that allow them to lead healthy lives.

Your community should also provide its residents with different ways to stay physically active such as walking trails, sports activities and swimming pools available through your local parks and recreation department. These facilities should be open for everyone to use.

There should also be healthy food options that promote nutritious and well-balanced eating habits. These can include well-balanced school meals, healthy snacks options in vending machines and opportunities to have healthy options at local restaurants. You can begin assessing your community by making a list of healthy opportunities that are already available to you and other residents.

Let's begin by doing some research. Do a short survey in your school or organization and ask the questions below. Be sure to make a list of all your responses.

### ASK YOURSELF AND OTHER STUDENTS:

➤ What are places in your area that provide opportunities for people to enjoy physical activities?

➤ What options for healthy food choices are already available to the community or school?



### ➤ GOOD TO KNOW:

A policy-relevant solution is a solution you can implement using the help of other organizations and decision-makers. (For example, club members and advisors agreeing to serve only healthy snacks at meetings.)

An environmental-relevant solution is a solution that provides tools for achieving healthy eating and physical activity goals. (For example, putting up posters and signs in the hallway reminding students to stay physically active by taking a walk after school instead of watching TV.)



Once you've identified what resources are available to you and your community, you can now work to figure out what should be done. Does your community need to provide more opportunities for physical activity (like build a walking trail) or improve existing resources (like clean up a park)?

**YOU CAN DO THIS BY CONTINUING THE RESEARCH YOU'VE ALREADY STARTED. ASK YOUR SCHOOL, COMMUNITY AND PEERS:**

- Are there enough opportunities for nutrition and physical activity in our community?
- Are the existing opportunities safe? (Are they well-lit? Secure? Well-maintained?)
- Are they affordable? (Are they open to community members for free or at a relatively low cost?)
- Are they open to community members and students at reasonable hours?

Remember, there is no standard checklist of healthy resources that every community should have. Resources used to stay physically active and maintain a healthy diet can be unique to every community depending on its location and the preferences of the people living there. It's important to use the answers to the questions above to assess your community, school or club to understand their needs and work toward a positive solution.

**FOCUS YOUR EFFORTS BY EVALUATING EACH PROBLEM AND ASKING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

- What are the current rules or policies regarding this problem? (For example: Students would like to have gym equipment available to work out but can't afford gym memberships. There is a gym at school for school athletes and P.E. classes, but it is closed off to other students after school.)
- What are your goals in solving this need? (For example: To work with the principal and P.E. teacher to implement after-school gym hours that are available to other students and community members.)
- What do you hope to accomplish? (For example: To get 40 students to attend the determined gym hours each week.)

**➤ GOOD TO KNOW:**

Decision makers are people in your school or community, like your principal, mayor or school superintendent, who have the authority to change rules and make new policies. Although they have this authority, they may not know all of the areas that need change. This is why it's important for you to provide them information about the problems you face and make suggestions on the best ways to solve them. They are important in helping you make important changes.





Once you have a better understanding of the needs in your community and the complexities surrounding the issues, you can move on to create some realistic solutions.

To help better define your issue or problem, use the “Analyzing the Issue” worksheet on FloridaYEAH.com.

## STEP THREE: SUGGESTING POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

It is important, during this step, that you not only address the needs of your peers and community, but also their wants. For example, if your school needs more access to nutritious food, should you suggest changing snacks in the vending machines or should you ask for more salads to be served at lunch? What if your community needs more access to physical activity? Do you suggest building a bike path, or do you create a soccer club at school?

To help you assess the specific wants of your own community, you can use the survey at FloridaYEAH.com to get suggestions from people in your school and community.

The survey will help you to discover what kinds of activities your peers enjoy the most and what healthy foods they prefer to eat. It will allow you to focus on solutions that everyone will appreciate and want to use. By meeting the wants of your peers and neighbors, your efforts will gain more support and prove to be more successful in the long run.

Think for a moment how this might work in your school. If most of the students you survey enjoy playing basketball after school, it wouldn’t make sense to pay special attention to maintaining a volleyball court. Instead, these students would be more concerned about having a well-lit basketball court. With their support, you can all work together to get your local park district to install lights on the courts in the local park. Once you succeed, those students will be more likely to play basketball after school instead of going home to watch TV.

The results from your survey will guide you in creating a list of realistic solutions. You will have a better understanding of whether or not you should suggest more walking trails, safer public parks or to build basketball and tennis courts to solve the problem of limited access to physical activity. You will also know if students at your school prefer healthy breakfast options, healthy snacks in vending machines or more fruits and vegetables during lunchtime.

To help better understand what your peers and community want, use the “Needs and Solutions” worksheet on FloridaYEAH.com.

**Team Work:** Create a committee within your group to come up with a list of solutions using the information you gathered through your research from steps one and two. By doing this, you can make sure that the solutions you come up with in your committee meet the needs discovered in your survey. You can include group members and even other student leaders in this committee.

Solutions can range from changing the way people think about healthy activities and healthy eating habits (putting up posters in your cafeteria with friendly reminders to choose healthy foods) to things that may need to go all the way to the school board, like changing rules and policies (implementing a county-wide physical activity awareness week).







## STEP FOUR: CHOOSING A REALISTIC SOLUTION

Now that you have identified the needs in your school or community and you have listed some possible solutions, you should be excited about getting things done. This is a good feeling, but don't get ahead of yourself too quickly. Many solutions require further research to make sure it's possible to accomplish them.

For example, you might recognize that your school needs more healthy snacks,

### ➤ GOOD TO KNOW:

One important way to stay physically active is to walk. Walking to the store, through the park or to school are all ways to stay physically active. You can take the PBS Community Walking Quiz at [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com) to determine if your community gives its residents enough opportunities to take walks.

### ➤ GOOD TO KNOW:

PSA (Public Service Announcement) is like a commercial, but instead of selling a product, it tells community members a message that will benefit them and others.

so you come up with a solution to purchase vending machines with healthy snacks for your school. However, if your school has a binding contract with the vending machine company that it can't break, you may not be able to bring in another vending machine. Instead, you might be able to meet with the current company and talk with them about changing the kinds of snacks they place in their machines. Another solution to the problem is to sell healthy snacks in school as a fundraiser for your organization.

Once you have a list of possible solutions that will meet both the needs and wants of your school and community, it is important to focus on one solution at a time. It's best if you identify a policy-relevant solution that you can work toward as a group. Policy-relevant solutions are often easier to undertake because they simply require getting support from peers or changing peoples' minds.

To identify a policy-relevant solution, ask yourself the following questions:

- Which solutions can we work to get implemented as an organization?
- Which solutions are relevant or interesting to people in our club, school or community?
- Which solutions can be implemented by changing the rules or by adding new ones?



➤ Which solution can be realistically accomplished within a certain time frame?

➤ Which solutions can we work to accomplish by enlisting the help of our principal, legislator, mayor or teachers?

Organizations and decision-makers often prefer to support changes that they know can produce results. Therefore, it is important that your solution is measurable - meaning you can describe the results during and after you've implemented your solution. Some examples of measurable solutions include:

➤ A weekend beach/park clean up club to promote environmental health as well as encourage students to get physically active during the weekend. You can measure your success by counting the number of students who attend this program each week and the amount of trash picked up during the clean up.

➤ An after-school workout class enlisting the P.E. teacher as a trainer. You can measure your success

by tracking how many hours of physical activity the class participates in throughout each week or how many students consistently come to class.

➤ A breakfast club that sells healthy breakfasts like fruit and yogurt to students before school. You can measure your success by counting how many fruits and vegetables are sold and eaten.

➤ Making a final decision about which solution to work toward may require a little more effort – don't get frustrated. It may involve interviewing more students or community members. You've already identified what solutions are realistic and which ones fit your school and community's needs. Make sure to ask others in your club, student body and community if they think the solution you and your committee picked would be effective. After all, this new idea, program or rule could possibly affect them too.

➤ To help better define your proposed solutions, use the "Realistic Solutions" worksheet on [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com).





## STEP FIVE: CREATING A CLEAR MESSAGE

Now that you have identified the solution that you're going to implement, it's important that you and your club create a clear message to deliver to other students, community members, the media and decision-makers. Having a clear message is important and it should reflect your concerns regarding the issue.

The message you choose should reflect the need you discovered through the survey taken in step one, explain why the need is important to resolve and should briefly state the final solution you and your team chose in step three.

Be specific – use simple language that your audience (other students, community members, the media or decision-makers) will respond to. Most advocate groups find that it's best to keep the message to a three-sentence maximum. This way, your message is clear and easy to remember.

An example of a clear message might be:

"Healthy meals are important in promoting healthy

students. Implementing a healthy after-school meal program encourages students to participate in healthy and positive activities."

You can also use a shorter version as a slogan:

"Healthy meals make healthy students."

Each member of your organization should clearly understand the message. You will be asked many questions about the problem and the solution, so it's important that you and other members of your club are ready to answer the following questions:

- What is the problem? Why is it a problem?
- What are the existing rules or policies regarding the issue you are trying to solve?
- What is your solution? How will it work?
- What is your plan to implement the solution?
- What are the goals you are trying to reach?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- How will you know if you have reached your goals? How will you measure your success?

To help better define your message, use the "Clear Message" worksheet on [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com).



## STEP SIX: CONTACT THE APPROPRIATE DECISION- MAKERS

Now that you and your team are all working together toward a clear and common goal, it is important to get key decision-makers involved. There are several people in your school and community who can help you implement your solution.

You should begin by compiling a list of all the decision-makers in your community. Make sure you include their full name, professional title, and contact information. Use the “Decision-Maker List” worksheet on FloridaYEAH.com.

This list should include people who are capable of helping you make the changes you want. Some of the decision-makers who have the most influence over policies regarding school meals, activities and programs include:

- Your principal
- Your health teacher
- Your P.E. teacher
- Your guidance counselor
- Your student body president
- Your mayor
- Health professionals like doctors, nurses, nutritionists and county health department employees
- Gym owners, personal trainers and sports coaches
- Any other professionals in your community that can provide you assistance and guidance

Once you have compiled the list, you can begin to contact each one individually. It is important to realize that these decision-makers can be very useful resources in furthering your projects.

It is important to gain their commitment; to do so you

must show them you are serious about the issue. To get decision-makers on board, you should be respectful, professional and organized when you decide to contact them. Here are some suggestions:

- Maximize the credibility of your message
- Use fact sheets that support your message (a sample fact sheet can be found at [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com))
- Incorporate graphics or illustrations that support your message
- Use a program like PowerPoint to create formal presentations to deliver your message
- Incorporate the results from your surveys to show decision-makers that there are many other people that feel the same way you and your club members do
- Decide the best way to reach the decision-maker at the best time
- A formal or informal meeting (a sample meeting invitation can be found at [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com))
- A visit to their office
- A phone call (a sample script can be found at [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com))
- Letters from yourself, your organization, or other involved individuals and/or organizations (samples can be found at [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com))







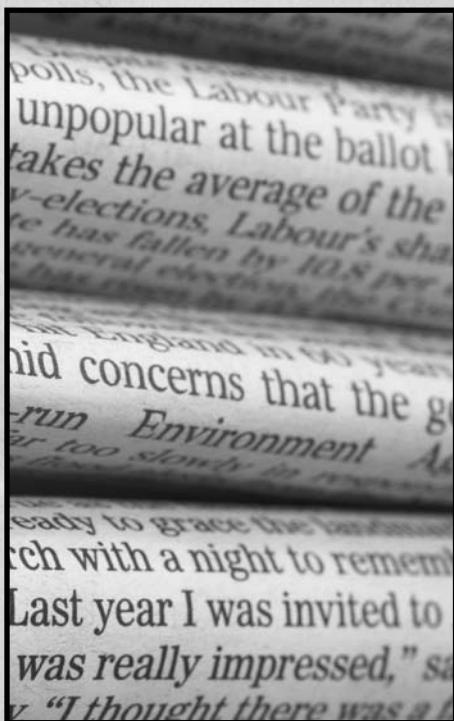
## **STEP SEVEN:** **USING THE MEDIA TO DELIVER YOUR MESSAGE**

Once you have completed all of the previous steps and have rallied support from decision-makers, you can now begin to deliver your message and inform the public. By doing so, you will likely generate more support from others.

You can inform the public in many different ways. Use a combination of ways to let people in your community know about your issue. The more they see or hear it, the more they are likely to remember.

You can generate news stories with local media, place advertisements around the community, ask local radio or TV stations to run public service announcements (PSAs) or read your message during your school's morning announcements.

# GENERATE NEWS STORIES



The media can be a powerful tool to inform the public about what's going on in the community. The media can deliver your message to a very large audience and create awareness and support for your issue. However, to get them to do so may be a challenge because there are many stories happening in your community at the same time. You must convince the media that your issue is interesting to their viewers, listeners and readers.

First, you should identify newspaper, radio and television stations in your area. Once you get this information, compile a media contact list. You can do this by browsing the stations' websites or by calling each media outlet in

your area to find out who would be the right person to approach. Remember, your media contact list should include the name of the media outlet (e.g., FOX13 News), the name of the contact (reporter or editor), their fax number, telephone number and email address.

Most important are fax numbers and e-mail addresses because postal mail is often too slow to communicate with the media. This process may take some time, so be patient and persistent. Use the "Media Contact List" worksheet on FloridaYEAH.com to develop your list.

After you have your media list, begin the process of pitching your story ideas. The best way is to send a press release. A press release informs the media about a story, event, issue or other news story. The press release should be interesting and catch the attention of the reader. Remember, the media will be reading many press releases that day and you want them to cover your story. Be sure to include clear details about the issue, who is involved, what is happening, why the story is important to the community and whom they can contact for interviews and further details. Make sure your press release is neat and easy to read. Use a letterhead from your organization or your school. Most important, always have a friend or club leader check your press release for grammatical errors. See a sample press release

on FloridaYEAH.com.

When you contact the media, keep in mind that they work on very tight deadlines and need quick and accurate information. Before you decide to give them a call, make sure you know how to sell your story idea. Be prepared. Make a list of points of interest to bring up in your conversation and be sure you tell them how your story relates to what's going on in the community.

Be clear and answer basic questions such as: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Always be honest and considerate of their deadlines, but be assertive and confident.

When talking to reporters, here are the important things to remember:

- **Always make sure you know who the audience is and what they are interested in knowing.**
- **Keep your message short and simple. Decide on a few points that are the most important to the audience and stick to them.**
- **Be honest. Don't be afraid to say that you'll call back with an answer if you don't know it right away.**
- **Respect deadlines. Try to submit things before they are due.**
- **Practice interviewing with friends or a club leader. Have them ask you questions that the reporter might ask in the interview.**



# ADVERTISING

Advertisements are also great ways to deliver your message to your school and community. However, unlike media coverage, advertisements take a bit more time and effort and will require additional resources (most advertisements cost money).

Here are a few suggestions if you choose to advertise:

- Use posters, banners and fliers (See samples on [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com))
- This is an inexpensive way to deliver your message. Many establishments will allow you to hang posters in their windows or on community corkboards, or school will most likely allow you to hang signs in the cafeteria or hallway if you ask for permission.
- Be creative. For example, design fun posters that give information of local events encouraging physical activity or healthy eating tips.
- Create a PSA to run in your school or local television and radio (Use the sample PSA script on [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com) as a template to make your own.)
- If you have a television production department at your school, you can create a PSA featuring students. TV stations may run the PSA for free or at a minimal cost. If not, you may find an organization or business to sponsor your PSA.
- Create a print ad to run in your school newspaper. You can use this ad to:
  - \* Remind students to eat more fruits and vegetables
  - \* Remind students to be more physically active
  - \* Let students know about an event (like TV Turnoff Week)

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

In order to get your message out, you first must know the best media outlet that gets to the audience you're trying to reach. For example, do people in your community listen to the radio a lot during the day? It may be a good idea to ask a local radio station to run a PSA or do an interview.

You can find out the best ways to reach your audience by simply asking them what media they use the most. You can even do a PSA, advertisement or interview in Spanish if many people in your community say they are more comfortable speaking Spanish than English.

To make sure your message reaches the target group, you have to choose the most appropriate language and media outlet is used.

## IDEAS TO INCREASE HEALTHY OPPORTUNITIES

**Just a Reminder:** When thinking about changes that are needed in your community, remember that there are different kinds of solutions you can work toward implementing.

There are environmental changes, which focus on making more things available to people. These can include things like installing bike racks, organizing beach or park clean-ups or organizing a month-long walking challenge.

A policy change issue includes things that need to be addressed by changing or adding a rule. Rules that allow a new club (like a walking club) to be officially part of the school registry are considered policy changes. Other policy changes may include a rule allowing the school gym to be open after school or a policy that encourages participation in a dance class after school.

Now that you know how to identify and address problems, here are more ideas that may help you promote healthy lifestyles in your school and community.

Maybe your school needs more opportunities for physical activity or maybe more options for healthy food on campus. Whatever the issue, on the next page are some creative ideas to help you and your team get started.



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## GOAL: INITIATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Being overweight or at risk for being overweight is caused by a number of factors, but one of the primary reasons is a lack of physical activity. Students should participate in 60 or more minutes of physical activity each day in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle. In order to meet this goal, here is a list of some fun ideas to help you get started:

### AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS:

- Find a community leader or teacher to offer classes or clubs after school. Think of fun activities like roller blading, bicycling, dance or even self-defense.

- Policy check: Is your school gym open after hours? On weekends? This may be a policy you and your team can work to change if necessary.
- Case Study: Francisco Bravo Medical Magnet School in California offered Judo demonstrations to students. It was a successful endeavor and a great way to get kids moving while teaching them about discipline, respect and physical activity.

### STUDENT CHALLENGES:

- Create fun challenges designed to encourage physical activity.
- Policy check: Implementing a “TV Turn Off Week” in your school can be a fun way to make healthy living one of your school’s policies.
- Case Study: One school in Florida challenged their students to give up TV for an entire week. Instead of watching TV, they found other creative ways to spend their time like taking a walk, playing community sports or volunteering at a local playground. At the end of the week, students found out they didn’t need the TV to have fun and many students continued the challenge for much longer than a week.
- Create a month long walking challenge. Find a local business or organization to donate pedometers and give one to each student. Have each homeroom teacher record how many steps his or her students walked each day. Then, present the homeroom with the most steps at the end of the month with a prize like a donated free-month membership to the YMCA or other gym.
- Changing the environment: By giving pedometers to students, you are adding a tool to their environment that will help them integrate healthy practices into their daily routine. Host a school field day. Use this day to encourage healthy eating and physical activity. Organize relay races and other challenges for students to compete against one another. Set up booths for taste testing healthy meals and snacks and give demonstrations of fun physical activities.
- Changing the environment: Give students a chart to take home with them as a daily reminder to record their 60 minutes of physical activity.



## GOAL: ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING

Healthy eating plays a huge role in preventing obesity. In addition, it can help them feel more energetic, lessen their stress, and help them do better in school. That means healthy eating is a necessity and should be one of your top priorities. Here are some ideas to help you get started:

### SCHOOL:

Talk to your parents, teachers, principal and school board and suggest that healthy food be offered in the school cafeteria and vending machines.

Policy check: Changing the kinds of food offered by working together with the principal and business owner is a great way to make effective changes in meal policies.

Case Study: A group of students in King City High School in California worked with their principal and the snack company to offer healthy snacks in their school vending machines. Now students are able to buy low-fat pretzels and cereal bars instead of potato chips and candy.

Post signs regarding nutrition information and healthy eating tips on vending machines, cafeteria walls and even hallways.

Changing the environment: By adding posters and signs, you are changing the environment and reminding students what kinds of foods they should eat in order to maintain a healthy diet.

Offer healthy snacks at your club meetings instead of

cookies and chips. This will promote healthy eating and encourage your members to explore different ways to make healthy foods fun.

Policy check: Ask your 4-H leader how to incorporate this healthy snack policy in your club's meetings.

### IN THE COMMUNITY:

➤ **Work with people in our community to plant and maintain a community vegetable or fruit garden.** You can plan a healthy meal banquet using the fruit and vegetables you grow. Be sure to invite everyone who worked hard to grow them. You can also offer free cooking classes incorporating lots of fruits and vegetables into the recipes.

➤ **Changing the environment: Adding a garden to your community can remind people to eat more fruits and vegetables.**

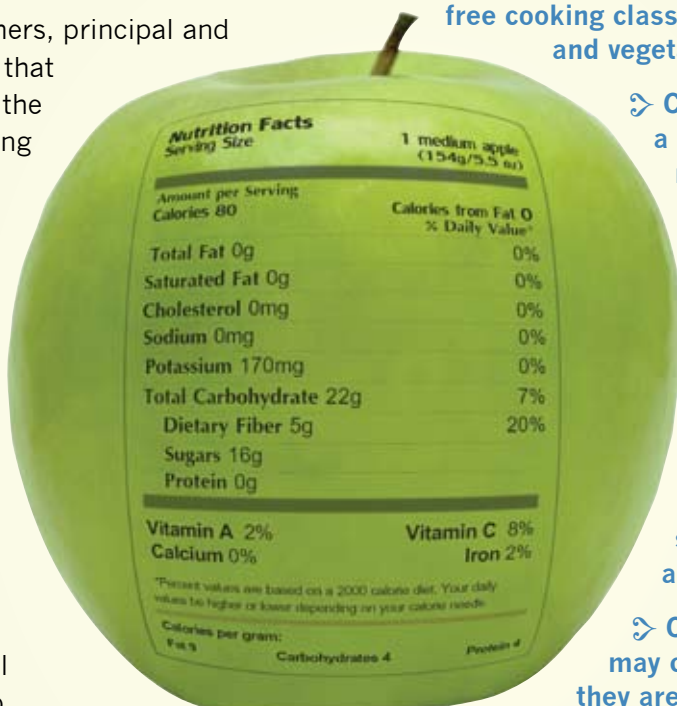
➤ **Work with members of your club to start a concession stand that offers healthy snacks during your school's football games or other community activities.** You can offer salads and fruits or even healthier versions of traditional sports snacks like turkey burgers and sunflower seeds.

➤ **Changing the environment: People may choose to eat healthier foods if they are offered the chance.**

➤ **Work with a restaurant owner to label heart-healthy food options on their menu.** By doing this, people will have the information necessary to choose healthier foods even when they eat out.

➤ **Policy check: Work with the restaurant owner and even a nutrition expert in order to label the foods correctly.** Creating a standard for healthy food options throughout your community is a great way to make healthy food policies part of your town

➤ **For more examples of what kids have been doing in schools all around the country, check out [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com).**



## PARENTS: ANOTHER RESOURCE!

Don't forget that your parents are also community members and it's very likely that they will be some of your biggest supporters. Use them to help encourage healthy activities around your community.

Talk about incorporating healthy eating habits into your meals at home. Go grocery shopping with your parents and ask them to buy healthy snacks instead of high-calorie snacks. You can even make a list for them to use as a reminder. If your parents come from another country, it's very likely that they know about fruits and vegetables that are new to you, so ask them to teach you about them and the tastiest ways to eat them.

You can also encourage your parents to help you promote healthy habits and activities by talking to their friends and coworkers. Give them posters to place at work to remind coworkers to eat healthy meals and snacks.

Your example could persuade your parents to adopt the same healthy habits you've learned – eating healthy meals and becoming more physically active, like taking a walk after dinner or getting some friends to play baseball or soccer on the weekends. Remind them that doing these things will not only improve their health, but also give them more energy to do their everyday tasks.

## PUTTING THE TOOLKIT TO USE

This toolkit was created to give you a basic plan of action to make positive, healthy changes in your school, organization and community. Realize that this is only a starting point. You will soon find out that to truly change policy and your environment, you will have to go beyond these pages. While the foundation of advocacy was laid out here, you will have to find out what works best for you. Remember, there is no one right way – each school, community and club is different.

Also remember that you are not alone in your efforts to make your surroundings and your peers healthier. There are many peers and community adults who see the importance of daily physical activity and a well-balanced diet. By using this toolkit, hopefully you will be able to build relationships with people like you.

In addition to your friends and decision-makers, there are several online resources where you can find further information about health advocacy. For more resources, visit [FloridaYEAH.com](http://FloridaYEAH.com) for a complete list.

## GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR IMPORTANT WORK

